

Report on GEAR Forums - July 2023

GEAR Forums provide an opportunity to update women in the JCU community on JCU's actions towards gender equity, and to provide a space where women are welcome to raise and discuss equity issues that are important to them and share their views and experiences. Forums are scheduled twice a year during 2023. GEAR Forums are confidential, with the GEAR Coordinator producing a de-identified report that summarises the kinds of issues discussed across the Forums. GEAR Forum reports are used to inform the ongoing work of JCU in achieving gender equity.

On the 11th and 13th July 2023, approximately 26 JCU women joined two GEAR Forums. Each forum began with an update on the GEAR team, and from the Academic Leads of the Cygnet projects. There was then space for open discussion to talk through whatever issues women wanted to raise. Below is a summary of the discussion at the Forum.

Update to GEAR Forum from Coordinator

- The overview began by setting out the refreshed terms of reference for the GEAR team. The GEAR team is chaired by Vice Chancellor Professor Simon Biggs.
- The GEAR team is an advisory board that provides early advice in processes, policy and practice relating to gender equity for work that sits within the university's strategic priority of "Empowering our People". GEAR team members communicate with the broader JCU community about the SAGE Cygnet process, and work with other equity-focussed groups.
- The Coordinator, Dr Ryl Harrison supports the Chair of the GEAR, and coordinates GEAR meetings and forums.
- The Academic Leads, Associate Professor Karen Joyce - CSE, and Professor Stewart Lockie - Promotions, are leading JCU's two Cygnet processes in 2023/2024.

Update to GEAR Forum from Academic Lead, CSE Leadership and Culture Cygnet

- The Cygnet Application is looking at Leadership and Culture in the College of Science and Engineering to identify the impact of recent changes on women's experiences.
- The College of Science and Engineering is the only College at JCU in which women are underrepresented at all academic levels from A – E. The College has an Equity and Diversity Committee and has recently changed from an all-male executive team, to now having women in key executive positions.
- Baseline data on recruitment, promotion, workload and retention are being collated, with workload data being difficult to obtain.
- A university-wide survey on culture will be deployed by Human Resources in the next few months, with a CSE-specific pulse survey deployed in February/March 2024 to test interventions. The plan is to submit the CSE application in May 2024.

Update to GEAR Forum from Academic Lead, Promotions

- The Cygnet Application is documenting JCU's changes to the academic promotions process to identify the impact on women's experiences of seeking promotion.
- Previous research at JCU identified barriers within the promotions process that adversely impacted those who had non-traditional career paths, and subsequent changes have been made.
- There will be some focus groups, interviews, and opportunities at future GEAR forums to provide feedback, and to enable the identification of further actions to improve the process.

Forum Discussion Summary

JCU's overall Gender Equity approach

- Women attending the GEAR Forum for the first time were interested in understanding how the two Cygnet applications fitted into JCU's overall approach to gender equity (in areas that were not currently part of a Cygnet Application). It was noted that, outside of JCU's work with SAGE through the current Cygnet applications, Senior Managers at JCU have organisational responsibility for gender equity within their Divisions, and for different actions that sit under their portfolios (for example, Human Resources and Hiring Managers are responsible for ensuring that gender equitable practices are deployed in recruitment).

WISTEM

- There is a WISTEM group (Women in STEM, pronounced Wisdom) at Townsville campus for women working and studying in STEM disciplines to meet, discuss and strategise. The group has a Teams channel and have an in-person lunch catchup on the Townsville campus every Wednesday from 12.15 – 1.15pm in 017-139 tearoom. Women are very welcome to join and grow the group to create a vibrant and engaged community of work who are doing great work, breaking down stereotypes and building the next generation of role models and mentors.

Promotions

- Professional and Technical women raised a lack of transparency in decision-making about who is given opportunities to act in higher roles, with some acting positions being in place over significant periods of time.
- Academic women noted it is easier to get a new position at a higher level elsewhere, than it is to get promotion at your own university (this pattern being common across the sector).
- Women noted the Academic Promotions process applies to people on fixed-term contracts.
- Women noted the need for supervisors, academic heads, and promotions assessment teams, to be trained to understand and support the shift to looking at impact, not just research impact, or research metrics. Women also noted the need for Managers to proactively encourage and support women to work towards promotion.

Institutional culture and leadership

- Women noted the continued lack of inclusion and representation of women in cases where all male panels were speaking on behalf of the university. This topic has been raised in previous GEAR Forums with women recommending men proactively ask organisers who else has been included before deciding to accept an invitation or request to speak.

This report has been written by GEAR Co-ordinator:

Ryl Harrison, PhD, Strategic Policy Adviser T (07) 4781 6259

E gear@jcu.edu.au

<https://www.jcu.edu.au/gender-equity-action-and-research>